

**PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION SERVICES (PICS)
NIH - TASK ORDER**

RFTOP#223 TITLE: Heuristic Study of the National Library of Medicine
TOXNET and ChemIDplus Web Sites

PART I – REQUEST FOR TASK ORDER (TO) PROPOSALS

A. Point of Contact Name:	Cindy Love
Phone- 301-496-5306	Fax- 301-480-3537
Proposal Address:	Billing Address:
6707 Democracy Blvd.	Accounts Payable, OFM, NIH
Suite 510	Bldg 31, Room B1B39
Bethesda, MD 20892	Bethesda, MD 20892-2045

B. PROPOSED PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 90 days from data of award.

C. PRICING METHOD: Firm Fixed Price - Firm should provide a single price. Please describe the methods to be employed and the estimated number of employee hours required. Firm rates for use of usability testing facilities and equipment. Describe the development of task scenarios and other factors of the testing process.

Currently available funding is limited to \$10,000. If, in the opinion of your firm, this is not a sufficient amount to conduct an evaluation, please specify how to best spend available funds, which tasks will remain undone, and the additional amounts necessary to complete the evaluation.

D. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS: Proposals should be submitted to me by e-mail. Please enter in the subject line the following text, "RFTOP# - Proposal." A signed task order form will later be requested from the successful bidder.

E. RESPONSE DUE DATE: Friday, September 17, 2004 at 4:00 PM EDT

F. TASK DESCRIPTION:

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) Specialized Information Services Division desires to conduct an expert review or heuristic study of the TOXNET (<http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/>) and ChemIDplus (<http://chem.sis.nlm.nih.gov/chemidplus/>) web sites. These sites have used the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) online survey methodology for 10 months and will continue for another 12. Extensive survey results and user comments will be available for the contractor's review and use in this study. These web sites serve as a portal to toxicology and chemical information primarily used by toxicologists and researchers. Although the primary users are generally satisfied with the web sites, the ACSI survey indicates areas for improvement. NLM would like professional usability evaluation to examine the interfaces to determine how well they adhere to good user interface design principles (i.e., heuristics). The goal of the expert review is to identify the positive aspects of each site as well as major usability issues. An additional objective is to recommend solutions to usability problems.

Two functions, search and navigation, have been consistently identified (using a 10-point scale) as areas needing improvement. “Search” is defined as including: usefulness of search results; comprehensiveness of results; organization of results; and ability to narrow results. “Navigation” includes number of steps to get where you want; ability to find information you want; clarity of site map or directory; and ease of navigation. However, the ACSI methodology only identifies problem areas and does not make improvement recommendations based on how users actually search and navigate. This study will be designed to answer the following key questions:

- How well do TOXNET and ChemIDplus adhere to good user interface principles?
- Are the navigation and search features of these sites usable in the sense that all anticipated user groups can achieve their goals on the site? Navigation, site functionality, and usability of design will be evaluated.
- What changes or improvements would enhance search, navigation, and other functionality?
- Will users be more successful in using suggested improvements to access relevant information than in using the web sites as currently designed?

Results will be disseminated to NLM. Recommendations will be incorporated into the design to improve customer satisfaction with search, navigation and other functionality.

Study Design –

The web sites will be evaluated by web expert(s) using tasks and methodology developed by the contractor with input from NLM.

If feasible within the budget available, the web sites could also be tested through hands-on useability testing (or an alternative method recommended by the contractor in responding to this task order) to supplement answering the above questions.

The contractor will work closely with NLM to determine appropriate evaluation strategies, and will provide NLM with opportunities to observe any hands-on sessions.

Clearances

Any portion of this study soliciting users’ opinions will not require OMB clearance since no more than 8 individuals will be tested using any one database/web site or set of questions.

G. EVALUATION FACTORS

1. Corporate Experience:

The contractor shall have experience in the following:

- Evaluating chemical, technical, medical or information-intensive sites or online databases for useability according to web “best practices” and guidelines
- Preparing clear and concise reports and presentations
- Making recommendations for modifications to web page layouts and navigation schemes and site language that result in improved customer satisfaction
- Providing positive, clear, critical, and useful feedback and consultation to web teams on how to troubleshoot and improve their sites

If the proposal includes a component for evaluating users directly, the contractor shall also have experience in the following:

- Recruiting and remunerating subjects from target populations
- Preparing and conducting task analysis studies
- Preparing and conducting paper prototype tests, if needed
- Recording and analyzing response data

If the proposal includes a component for evaluating users directly, the contractor may utilize their own pre-existing lists of potential study subjects for the purposes of recruitment. NLM will also provide means for contacting possible subjects from TOXNET’s core users, toxicologists and researchers, who may be more difficult for a contractor to recruit. The contractor shall be able to perform usability testing at their site, on the NIH campus or the SIS offices off-campus. If the contractor proposes an alternative to hands-on usability testing, the contractor shall provide all resources necessary to perform the alternative.

2. Evaluation Process: The proposed evaluation procedures will be assessed by the NLM to determine the extent to which these procedures are likely to produce objective and meaningful feedback.

3. Price: While price will not be the most important evaluation factor, proposed prices will be considered in determining the firm that represents the best value to the government.

RFTOP#223 TITLE:
PART II - CONTRACTOR'S REPLY: CONTRACT #263-01-D-0_____ TO #
NICS-_____

Contractor:

Points of Contact:

Phone-

Fax-

Address:

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: Pricing Method
TOTAL ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOURS:
PROPOSED COMPLETION DATE:

FOR THE CONTRACTOR: _____
Signature Date

SOURCE SELECTION:

WE HAVE REVIEWED ALL SUBMITTED PROPOSALS HAVE DETERMINED
THIS FIRM SUBMITTED THE BEST OVERALL PROPOSAL AND THE
PRICE/COST IS REASONABLE.

Billing Reference # _____

Appropriations Data: _____

(ATTACH OBLIGATING DOCUMENT IF AN ROC WILL NOT BE USED.)

RECOMMENDED:

FAX # Signature - Project Officer Date

APPROVED: _____
FAX # Signature - Contracting Officer Date

NIH APPROVAL -

CONTRACTOR SHALL NOT EXCEED THE ESTIMATED LABOR HOURS OR
ESTIMATED TASK ORDER AMOUNT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF
THE CONTRACTING OFFICER & PICS COORDINATOR

APPROVED: _____
Signature – Larry Manning, NIH-PICS Coordinator Date